



Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine

107-3 | 2019

Les petites paysanneries des arrière-pays montagneux et forestiers

Small Farmers in Mountainous and Forested Hinterlands. Contexts, Constraints and Strategies

Preface

Mohamed Raouf Saïdi



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/6656>

DOI: 10.4000/rga.6656

ISSN: 1760-7426

Publisher:

Association pour la diffusion de la recherche alpine, UGA Éditions/Université Grenoble Alpes

Electronic reference

Mohamed Raouf Saïdi, « Small Farmers in Mountainous and Forested Hinterlands. Contexts, Constraints and Strategies », *Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine* [Online], 107-3 | 2019, Online since 30 January 2020, connection on 27 May 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/6656> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.6656>

This text was automatically generated on 27 May 2020.



La Revue de Géographie Alpine est mise à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

Small Farmers in Mountainous and Forested Hinterlands. Contexts, Constraints and Strategies

Preface

Mohamed Raouf Saïdi

EDITOR'S NOTE

Coordinator of this issue: Coralie Mounet, co-editor of *the Journal of Alpine Research*.

- 1 For centuries, small farmers (SFs) have made their living in the mountainous and forested areas of the Mediterranean hinterland, away from centres of power. These places have historically been places of refuge for the populations driven out from the plains – the excluded, the damned and the rebellious looking for means to subsist and resist (Braudel, 1966, Debarbieux, 2001). Nowadays, the SFs in the mountains and the forests, which have become more mixed and gradually more part of national entities, are paradoxically suffering from geographical remoteness and economic and social marginality. And yet, beyond the physical and the cultural environments' diversity and the relationships forged with the urbanised foreland, these same communities are developing adaptive practices on the basis of specific features that continue to be sensitive to various kinds of risk and uncertainty that public policy is unable to diminish.

Environmental constraints vs multi-activity and multifunctionality

- 2 In these environments, agropastoral practices face numerous physical (orographic and bioclimatic) and human (temporary or permanent migration) constraints, including the wilding of nature (agricultural abandonment, increase in some wildlife species).
- 3 In collective representations, these areas – long neglected by public policy in the South – are often associated with misery and underdevelopment and are referred to in statistics as repulsive spaces and as the main repository of poverty. The so-called participatory public policies that focus on these areas follow the ideology of nature conservation and are often not concerned with the social issues and conflicts between the farming communities that result from the area's many uses (Aderghal, 2004, 2007). In the north, despite various (local, national and European) incentive schemes, the mountainous and forested hinterlands continue to “lose their vitality”.
- 4 To cope with these constraints, SFs deploy multi-activity strategies that combine agricultural diversification with craft and business. In response to the social demand for nature driven by a greening ethos (Saïdi, 2012) and encouraged by various incentive funds, there has been a development, to varying degrees, in new forms of tourism that are both (directly or indirectly) generating additional sources of income (jobs and services) and based on enhancing local tangible and intangible heritage. All of this has been accompanied by a significant public undertaking to invest in infrastructure and provide socio-economic support.

Conflicts of use and commodification vs farmer solidarity and innovation

- 5 Multi-activity and multi-functionality are crucial in keeping the farmers from moving elsewhere. However, these strategies face serious constraints – the most important of which are the conflicts of use and of the appropriation of resources.
- 6 On the southern shore of the Mediterranean, SFs have had to deal with the State's legal appropriation of the forest for more than a century. Using restrictive and coercive legislation (forest codes that date back to the colonial era), the State has kept up the assimilation of “local populations” with simple “users” for a hundred years. In some cases, the forestry service pays seasonal local labour and mobilises public social and charitable schemes to keep families where they are (Boujou and Saïdi, 1996, Gardin, 2004) in order to meet the needs of the monopolistic exploitation of forest resources, forest maintenance and erosion control. In France, where forest legislation is looser and the state monopoly less exclusive, new legislation on forest fires appears to seriously hinder the viability of mountain farming (Vilain-Carlotti, 2015). Sometimes, the conflicts of use divide the SFs because of unending antagonism between farmers and herders (sedentary or in the process of sedentarisation) and longstanding competition between herders with respect to pastoral resources, which increases during periods of drought (Rosenbeger 2001, Noin 1970). Recently, the social demand for nature, along with the mercantile mobilisation of the ecological question and the “tourism development”¹ (and/or “touristification”) of the territories, has often accentuated competition between the farming families. Real estate and tourism

promoters, mostly outside the agricultural world and sometimes foreigners, who are quick to transform farmland and communal pastures into tourist complexes, also pose a serious threat. Thus, some mountainous and forested hinterlands in France and Mediterranean Europe are transformed from poor and arid agricultural areas into areas of land rent.

- 7 Up until now, neither conflicts of use nor competitions nor invasive market logic appear to have succeeded in completely upending the lives of the SFs living in the mountainous and forested hinterlands (with the notable exception of Corsica and Sardinia) because, along with adaptive strategies, new and traditional forms of solidarity form another lever of individual/family and collective resistance. In southern Mediterranean countries, where non-EU bodies specific to SFs are still non-existent or in their infancy, traditional solidarities (Auclair & Alifriqui, 2012) and, more recently, the development of associations in rural areas (Aubert and Saïdi, 2012), are nevertheless negotiating spaces – ramparts against land grabbing – and participate to some extent in preserving the SFs. In northern Mediterranean countries, the ingenuity and creativity of farmers’ organisations (trade unions, professional associations, local distribution networks etc.) are a channel for overcoming individualism, economic and political achievements and essential support for keeping local populations in place and for attracting others.
- 8 Carried out in the Mediterranean area (including 2 in Morocco) and Nepal and based primarily on empirical work deploying different procedures of investigation, the monographs in this issue reveal the different dynamics arising from the process of adaptation by small farmers to their physical, economic, social and political environment.
- 9 The contribution of Aude Nuscia Taïbi *et al.* focuses on the agroforestry parks of Azilal in the central High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. These parks, established by the local population some 600 years ago, have been diagnosed as being highly anthropized. However, data provided by dendrochronology and remote sensing as well as observations from the field observations show that, though these parks have certainly evolved in comparison with their original configuration, they have nonetheless retained their socio-economic functions, owing to the labour of maintenance carried out by local farmers. What appears as signs of degradation, reveal a strategy implemented by the atlasic agro-pastoral societies, one which takes account of the potential and constraints of their environment.
- 10 Based on the case of saffron in the Taliouine region of Morocco, Marie Oiry-Varacca's article inquires into the phenomena of labelling “local products” grown in marginalized mountain regions as a new means of requalifying these areas. The author’s critical observations reveal how this dynamic, driven from above, reinforces the relations of domination and submission of small farmers in the capitalist economy. More generally, she questions the “inflation of labels” of the European model and the ambiguities this implies for consumers.
- 11 Amor Mokhtar Gammar’s article analyses the current crisis of traditional agriculture in Tunisia's forest and mountainous areas as the result of a productivist agriculture, one that developed under the influence of an urban power and dates back to the colonial period, as well as the implementation of a coercive forestry code, which, to this day, remains in force. With the diversification of income sources resulting from pluriactivity and the development of certain sectors and state projects for rural

development, we are now witnessing a new dynamic whose implications are perceptible on the socio-demographic level and by the new relationship of peasants with forest resources.

- 12 The text by Céline Abadia *et al.* takes us to Nepal, in the Phark region (known by hikers on their way to Everest), where the Sherpa population, once composed of agro-pastoralists, is living with the development of market gardening; a profound change not without implications for agrarian activities and the allocation of local labour. Market gardening practiced at high altitudes, in the open field or in greenhouses has expanded rapidly since the end of the 1990s and is contributing to the enhancement of incomes and the quality of the population's diet, as well as the development of trade and supply-chains of facilities targeting tourists.
- 13 On the basis of archival research rich approach, Antoine Huerta's article submerges us into the world of small farmers from the mountainous and forest hinterland in the work of Pierre Deffontaines. Far from being limited to the Mediterranean area, P. Deffontaines' geographical (but also historical and ethnographic) work on "the small people" also includes the study of small peasantry in Latin America and Quebec.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aderghal M., 2007.- « Restructuring in Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral Systems of Atlantic Morocco », in Getel J. and Breuer I. (Eds.), *Pastoral Morocco. Globalizing Scapes of Mobility and Insecurity*, Wiesbaden.
- Aderghal M., 2004.- « Pour une nouvelle perception des montagnes marocaines », in Ait Hamza M. et Popp H. (Ed.), *La montagne marocaine : les représentations d'un espace marginal*, publication de la FLSH, série colloques et séminaires, n° 19, UM5 de Rabat.
- Aderghal M., 2014.- « Territoires, projets de développement et problématique touristique dans le pays d'Oulmes », in Berriane M. (Dir.), *Le tourisme dans les arrière-pays méditerranéens. Des dynamiques territoriales locales en marge des politiques publiques*, UM5 de Rabat-UMF (Fès), LMI-MediTer.
- Aubert P.-M., Saïdi M. R., 2012.- « Le fait associatif à l'épreuve de la dynamique sociale. Étude de cas dans la région de Skoura (Moyen Atlas, Maroc) », in Stoessel-Ritz J., Blanc M., Mathieu N. (Eds), *Développement durable, communautés et sociétés. Dynamiques socio-anthropologiques*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang.
- Auclair L., Alifriqui M. (Dir.), 2012.- *Agdal : patrimoine socio-écologique de l'Atlas marocain*. IRD-IRCAM éd., Rabat, Marseille.
- Berriane M. et Moizo B., 2014.- « Initiatives locales, politiques publiques et développement du tourisme en milieu rural au Maroc : Bilan de 15 années de tourisme dans les arrière-pays », in Berriane M. (Dir.), *Le tourisme dans les arrière-pays méditerranéens. Des dynamiques territoriales locales en marge des politiques publiques*, UM5 de Rabat-UMF (Fès), LMI-MediTer.

Braudel F., 1966 (édition de 1987).– La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II, Paris, Armand Colin, Tomes 1 et 2.

Bouju S., Saïdi, M. R., 1996.– « Le développement rural en Khroumirie : logiques paysannes et logiques des projets », in Elloumi M. (Ed.), Politiques agricoles, stratégies paysannes et développement rural, Tunis, Actes du colloque de l'IRMC, Tunis, 27-28-29 avril 1995, Ed. Alif et IRMC.

Debarbieux, B., 2001.– « Les montagnes : représentations et constructions culturelles », in Veyret Yvette (Eds), Les montagnes : discours et enjeux géographiques, Paris, SEDES, URL : <http://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:3976>

Gardin J., 2004.– « La forêt et l'État en Kroumirie : politique environnementale et contrôle social des populations rurales en Tunisie », Thèse de doctorat de Géographie, Université de Paris 10 Nanterre.

Mora O. (Coord.), 2008.– Les nouvelles ruralités à l'horizon 2030. Quae éd.

Noin D., 1970.– La population rurale du Maroc, Paris, PUF, 1re édition, 2 t.

Rosenbeger B., 2001.– Société, pouvoir et alimentation : nourriture et précarité au Maroc précolonial, Rabat, Editions Alizés.

Roux, B. Guerraoui D. (Dir), 1997.– Les zones défavorisées méditerranéennes : études sur le développement dans les territoires ruraux marginalisés, Paris, L'Harmattan, Casablanca, Les Éd. Toubkal.

Saïdi, M.R., 2012.– La Représentation sociale des zones humides. Enquête d'opinion, CNRS-LADYSS-DESMID, ministère de l'Écologie, du développement durable et de l'énergie, URL : <http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/Etude-sur-les-representations.html>

Vilain-Carlotti P., 2015.– « Perceptions et représentations du risque d'incendie de forêt en territoires méditerranéens. La construction socio-spatiale du risque en Corse et en Sardaigne », Thèse de Géographie, Université Paris 8.

NOTES

1. “The term [‘mise en tourisme’] refers to a process of planned, voluntarist tourist development of an area. It is quite different from touristification, which tends to refer, on the contrary, to a process of spontaneous tourist development”. Dewailly J.M., 2005, http://geotourweb.com/nouvelle_page_68.htm.

AUTHOR

MOHAMED RAOUF SAÏDI

Research fellow. UMR7533 Ladyss CNRS/ Université Paris Nanterre. Co-facilitator of the small farmers' group.
saidi.raouf@free.fr